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Metropolitan Cyril of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, *L'Évangile et la liberté : les valeurs de la tradition dans la société laïque*, translated with notes by Hyacinthe Destivelle OP and Hieromonk Alexander (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 256 pp. Pbk. €20. ISBN 2-20408-151-5.

Since 1989, Metropolitan Cyril has been President of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department of External Relations. This body claims a wide remit, encompassing oversight of the Russian Orthodox Church abroad, ecumenical dialogue, and mission within the borders of Russia, with the last of these including links with state and government, the media, arts and trades unions. Russians comprise the majority of Orthodox worldwide and the Metropolitan is therefore a figure of major international ecumenical importance. His is a conservative voice and more representative of wider opinion than the eirenic Orthodox ones like Bishop Kallistos Ware's more familiar to Westerners. It is especially important that this voice be heard by those whose image of Orthodoxy is centred on incense, icons and John Tavener.

The collapse of communism, and more recent economic reforms under Vladimir Putin, have transformed the political situation in which the Russian Orthodox Church operates. It has experienced liberation founded on the martyrdoms of countless faithful, tens of thousands of priests, and at least 130 bishops during the soviet era. The number of active parishes has tripled in the past two decades and there are currently thousands of seminarians. Yet the book's strong message is that the Church faces a new and equally potent adversary: Western liberalism and its host of attendant vices, among them feminism, gay rights, abortion and sexual licence.

Various questions raised are also arising in the West: ministry with people who are members of more than one parish; the unifying role of churches in places of social isolation; whether worship should employ traditional language or contemporary; the importance of collegiality; relationships with the Holy See. There is also suggestive discussion of the place of conscience in moral decision making which could have been an exposition of Joseph Butler.

Despite these points of convergence, the dangers of Protestantism and its alleged espousal of moral relativism are too frequently evoked in imprecise and sometimes inconsistent ways. The latter are due partly to the book's origin in a collection of papers and presentations delivered on different occasions to different audiences. Protestantism is defined in one place as in essence a liberal rereading of Scripture (p. 103), but it is hard to imagine this being the view of Calvin's magistrates in Geneva. In the extended interview which comprises the first third of the book, however, the Metropolitan recognizes that Protestantism is not necessarily doctrinally liberal, and states his desire to share a common witness with those Protestant churches which accept doctrinal norms (p. 63).

The question at the heart of this provocative collection concerns the concept of liberalism in political thought and practice. 'Liberalism' is here typically equated with moral relativism in ways entirely alien to Thomas Hobbes, John Locke or even John Stuart Mill. Given that the Church in Russia is currently enjoying the effects of an unprecedented dosage of liberal freedoms—of association, expression, religion—this continual anti-liberal refrain seems strange. The Kaliningrad philosopher Immanuel Kant is cited in defence of a moral focus for theology, but the fact that God becomes with Kant a mere postulate of moral action rather than a transcendent being with whom humans exist in relation would seem to demonstrate the theological hazards of pushing moral perspectives too far (p. 79).

A recurrent theme is Orthodoxy's place in present Russian society. In a country not having suffered the severe religious conflicts that have shaped Western Europe, Orthodoxy continues to make a major claim on Russian national identity. Yet while reading the book during a three-week visit to Russia, I gained the impression that current social and economic change will bring new challenges. The assertion is made that, in the West, Protestant churches have been emptied of members by lax moral teaching, but most Protestant ministers would recognize this analysis, repeated often on continental Europe, as too straightforward (p. 59). Instead, the Church in the West is exploring new ways of reconnecting with the cultural heritage it has spawned. Liberalism is indeed the historic creation of Western Christianity both Protestant and Catholic, and its roots are in the valuing of the

individual fundamental to Christian theology. This fact needs to be identified, articulated and celebrated.

One possible future consequence of cultural readjustment in Russia could be the ‘smaller church’ doctrine familiar in Catholic discussions: it is not membership numbers that matter, but purity of teaching and practice. This view is potentially lent extra weight by the sense prevalent in Orthodoxy that there exists no real distinction between the church militant on earth and the church triumphant in heaven. Compromise, traditionally the bread and butter of Anglican ecclesiology, seems to find less space here, at least at the moment. Yet the attentive, detailed engagement that Anglican theology at its best undertakes, in which willingness to compromise is key, can often have a positive effect on real life outcomes. Just one recent example in England is the concerted opposition by the bench of bishops in the House of Lords to the Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill Bill, which made a large contribution to the blocking of the Bill. The capacity of the Church in the West to remain in dialogue with political powers has helped foster a stable and tolerant liberal polity for which, despite its faults, many of us are thankful.

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